

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 EUR-12 DHA-02 AID-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01

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R 171000Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5754

INFO: RUFHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 339

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

ASMISSION USUN NY 884

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SREF, AG, SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA: UNHCRVISITS ALGERIA

1. FROM JAN 13-15 UNHCR SADRUDDIN AGHA KHAN VISITED ALGIERS. HE ARRIVED AT ORAN IN WESTERN ALGERIA JAN 13 AND FLEW TO TINDOUF IN SOUTHWEST JAN 14 WHERE HE VISITED AT LEAST SIX REFUGEE CAMPLS AND OTHER SAHRAOUI INSTITUTIONS JAN 14 AND 15. AT CAMPS HE RECEIVED BRIEFING FROM SAHRAOUI LEADERS AND WITNESSED APPARENTLY LARGE-SCALE DEMONSTRATIONS ORGANIZED FOR HIS BENEFIT. ON JAN 15 HE MET WITH PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE AND FON MIN BOUTEFLIKA IN ALGIERS.

2. IMPORTANT POINTS IN SADRUDDIN'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS WERE:

A. REASON FOR VISIT: SADRUDDIN SAID HE HAD COME HERE TO SEE CAMPS AND TO MEET WITH ALGERIAN AND SAHRAOUI RED CRESCENT REPRESENTATIVES AS WELL AS WITH OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS. HE SAID HE WOULD BE REPORTING TO UNSYG WALDHEIM ON HIS MISSION. HE STRESSED THAT MISSION STRICTLY HUMANITARIAN ALTHOUGH HIS ORGANIZATION KEPT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRACK OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AT UN AND REALIZED THAT DURABLE SOLUTIONS COULD NOT BE BASED SOLELY ON HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS. BEST SOLUTION, IN HIS VIEW, WOULD BE REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES.

B. UNHCR ASSISTANCE: UNHCR HAS APPEALED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR 12-MONTH PROGRAM, WHOSE COST WOULD BE \$5.7 MILLION PLUS 10,000 TONS OF COMMODITIES.

THIS WORKED OUT TO 13 MILLION ALGERIAN DINARS (SIC) WHICH MUST COVER NEEDS OF THE 50,000 REFUGEES, IF GURE GOA GAVE TO UNHCR "AT THE TIME." APPEAL TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR AID TO SAHRAOUI HAD YIELDED RESULTS, HE SAID, BUT HE HOPED SITUATION WOULD BECOME EVEN MORE ENCOURAGING.

C. NUMBERS OF REFUGEES: SADRUDDIN SAID HIS ORGANIZATION WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ESTIMATING NUMBERS OF REFUGEES IN TINDOUF REGION ALTHOUGH UN SECRETARIAT COULD CONDUCT CENSUS IF CONCERNED PARTIES REQUESTED IT. SADRUDDIN SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY HAD SEEN SEVERAL THOUSAND (PLUSIEURS MILLIERS) REFUGEES AND SAID IT WAS NOT HIS IMPRESSION THAT THESE PERSONS WERE BEING HELD HOSTAGE, AS CHARGED BY MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS.

3. FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS EMERGED FROM MEDIA COVERAGE OF VISIT:

A. SAHRAOUI REFUGEE POPULATION NOW 105,000. REFUGEE POPULATION HAD GROWN FROM 50,000 AFTER MOROCCAN BOMBARDMENT OF TIFARITI, EL GUELTA, AND AIN BENTITLI EARLY LAST YEAR TO 70,000 IN APRIL AND 94,000 DURING SUMMER.

B. DURING HIS VISITS TO REFUGEE CAMPS, SADRUDDIN SAW BANNERS BEARING SLOGANS WRITTEN IN SPANISH. REFUGEE SPOKESMAN ASSERTED THAT SPANISH LANGUAGE STILL BEING TAUGHT IN REFUGEE CAMP SCHOOLS.

C. ALGERIAN ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES VALUED AT ROUGHLY \$40 MILLION PER YEAR.

D. SWEDEN, NORWAY, HOLLAND, FRG, SWITZERLAND AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PHILIPPINES HAD MADE CONTRIBUTION. (PHILIPPINES DONATED 750 TONS OF SUGAR WHICH EXPECTED TO ARRIVE THIS WEEK.) CZECHOSLOVAKIA, FRANCE, EAST GERMANY, AND USSR ARE AMONG "NUMEROUS OTHER COUNTRIES" FURNISHING AID IN CASH AND KIND TO REFUGEES.

4. COMMENT: TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS IS FIRST TIME THAT ALGERIANS HAVE PUT NUMBER OF REFUGEES AT OVER 100,000. MEDIA HAVE CITED THIS FIGURE IN PAST, BUT IT HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO POLISARIO SOURCES. \$40 MILLION FIGURE IS ALSO FIRST CONCRETE INDICATION ALGERIANS HAVE GIVEN OF WHAT THEY ARE SPENDING ON SAHRAOUI REFUGEES.

5. SADRUDDIN WAS AT GREAT PAINS TO KEEP POLITICS OUT OF HIS VISIT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AND TO AVOID PLAYING NUMBERS GAME WITH RESPECT TO REFUGEES. NEVERTHELESS, HIS PRESENCE HERE WOULD SEEM TO CONSTITUTE PROPAGANDA SUCCESS FOR ALGERIANS AND KEEPS ATTENTION

FOCUSED ON SAHARA.

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Message Attributes

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